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BATMAN
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DOUG MOENCH
JIM APARO

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THE FREEDOM OF MADNESS!
OPEN FIRE!
BRAM BRAM BRAM BRAM BRAM
SPANG
CHEEOW
ZANG
ZING
RRRRRRRRRRR
BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE
DOUG MOENCH WRITER
JIM APARO ARTIST
ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST
RICHARD STARKINGS LETTERER
SCOTT PETERSON JORDAN B. GORFINKEL ASSISTANT EDITORS
DENNY O'NEIL EDITOR
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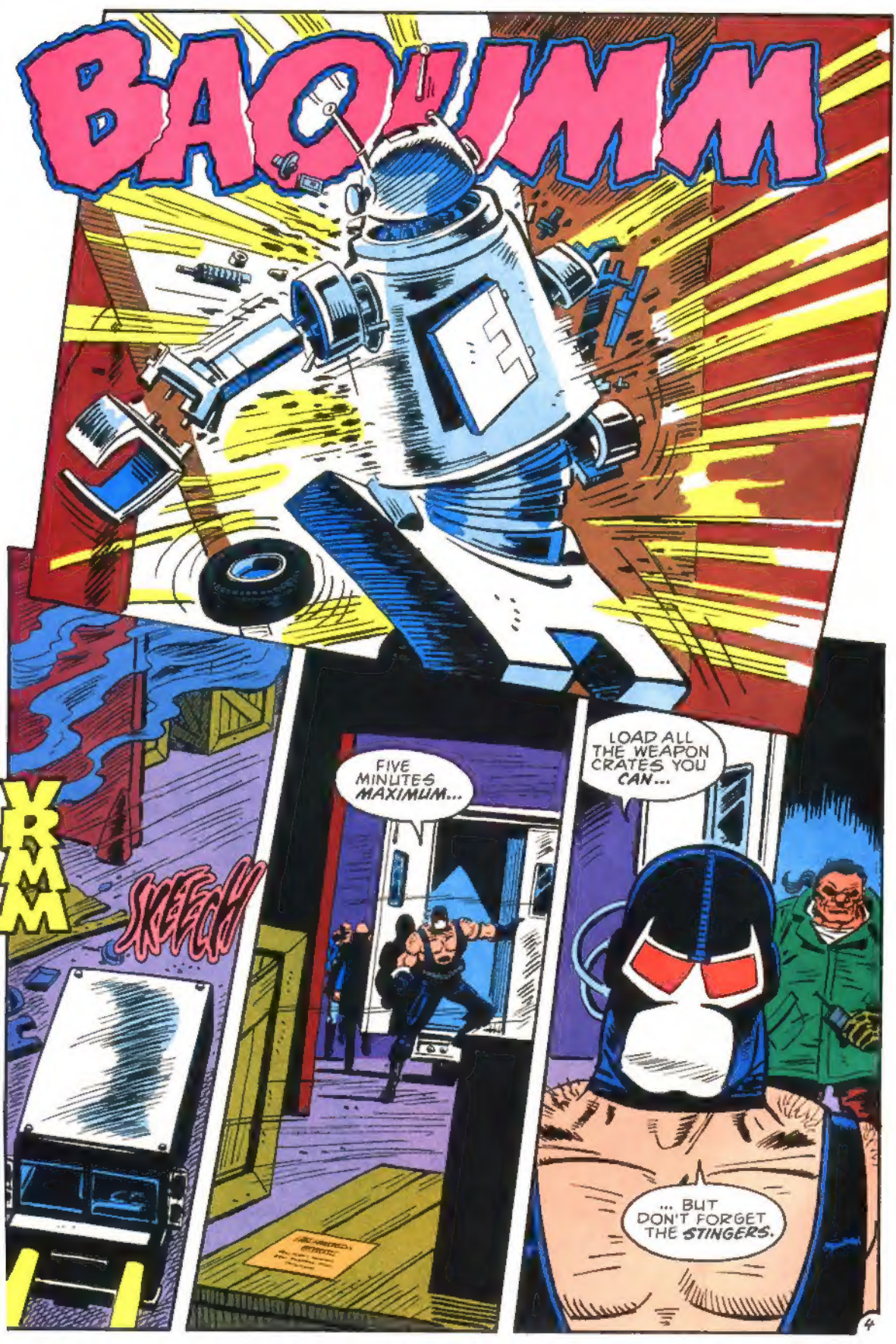
BRAM BRAM
CHER
SHREEEEEE
ZING SPAK
RUNNN!
YAAH!
BUMP
RRRRRRRRRRR
TIME TO GO--
JERK


BAOOMM
RMM
SKEECH
FIVE MINUTES MAXIMUM...
LOAD ALL THE WEAPON CRATES YOU CAN...
... BUT DON'T FORGET THE STINGERS.

POLICE H.Q:
IT'S LIKE AN ORDNANCE INVENTORY FOR WORLD WAR THREE, COMMISH...
AUTOMATIC ASSAULT RIFLES, ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES, MORTARS, HEAVY MACHINEGUNS, FRAGMENTATION GRENADES...
PIZZA KITCHEN
...AN' EVEN A FEW CRATES O' SHOULDER-LAUNCHED STINGER MISSILES.
AND THE ONLY BRIGHT SIDE IS THAT NO ONE WAS HURT...
NOT AFTER THE ARMORY GUARDS RAN AWAY FROM THEIR U.F.O MONSTER... BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME THERE'S STILL A BODY COUNT TO COME.
THEN YOU THINK THOSE MUNITIONS WERE STOLEN FOR DOMESTIC USE, MONTOYA?
WITH THAT M.O, COMMISSIONER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK...
MY GUESS IS NICARAGUA -- ROGUE C.I.A ELEMENTS.
...BUT ONE THING'S READY FOR THE BANK -- THAT WAS A WHOLE TRUCKLOAD OF MIGHTY EXOTIC WEAPONRY...
...AND RIGHT NOW IT'S LOOSE ON OUR STREETS!
YES...
...BUT IN WHOSE HANDS?
5

WE START BY HITTING THE VIOLENT WARDS HERE AT THE CENTER OF THE ROUNDHOUSE...
... AND WE FOLLOW WITH A HIT ON MAIN SECURITY -- HERE.
THE FIRST HIT WILL BE RELATIVELY LIGHT, JUST ENOUGH TO BREACH THE ROOF AND A FEW OF THE CELLS -- BUT THE SECOND HIT WILL BE HEAVY, TAKING OUT SECURITY AND SEALING THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND INMATES.
WE'VE CERTAINLY GOT THE FIREPOWER FOR IT.
BUT WHICH CELL DO WE OPEN FIRST? WHO CAN LEAD THE OTHERS -- INSPIRE THEM WITH HIS OWN VIOLENCE AND MADNESS?
I THINK I MAY HAVE A SUGGESTION, BANE...
AND BELIEVE ME, HE'S A REAL RIOT!
ARKHAM ASYLUM NORTH ELEVATION
The incessant laughter alone, echoing through dark steel corridors, is enough to make one doubt the very existence of sanity...

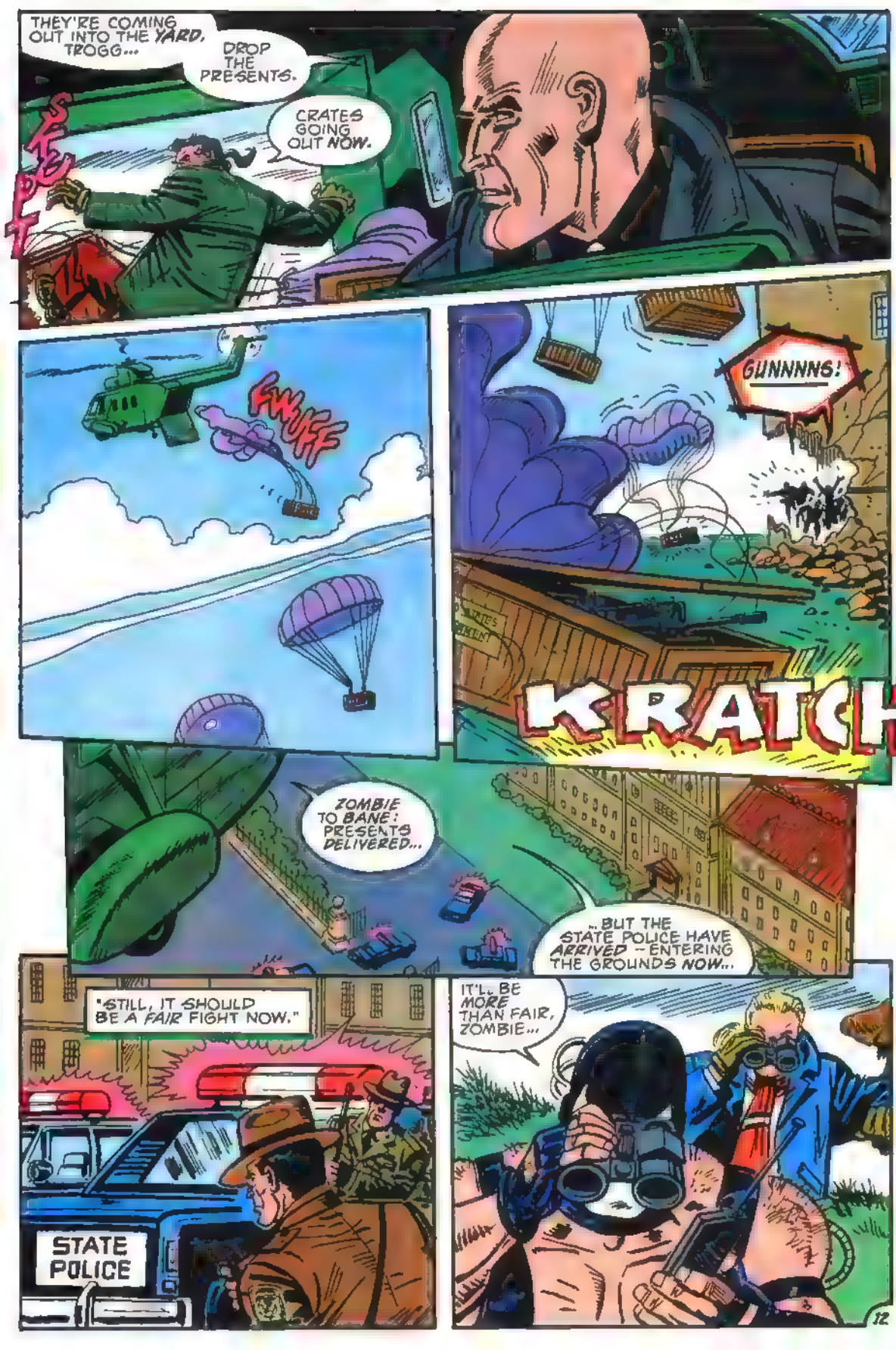
Add to that all the shrieks and whimpers, the snarls and whispers, all the cunning drool-garbled incantations of paranoia and revenge, and one sees that this is NOT, in fact, an ASYLUM.
It is, simply and unarguably, a MADHOUSE.
ARKHAM ASYLUM
FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE
Indeed, one wonders if madness might not be INFECTIOUS in a certain sense, a contagion by virtue of its omnipresent influence, so much more vivid and strident than the mundane, smothering cloak of so-called normalcy.
NOT, in fact, an ASYLUM.
It is, simply and unarguably, a MADHOUSE.
And if one is the keeper and controller of such a place, does that make one SANE -- or merely the KING of the MAD?
Indeed, one won
to
ks and
spers, all the
incantations
nd one sees
They have become my world, echoing down steel corridors to enter my MIND -- where they echo, now, even LOUDER...
...clamoring to get out.
If so, then surely I have been infected by now, for the laughter and shrieks, the canny gasps from the gloom, are the voices with which I live, here in Arkham, here in the madhouse of my making.
REAL SHORT?
I WANT IT OFF -- OUT OF THE WAY.
YOU GOT IT.
NO, I DON'T, NOT YET, BUT I WILL GET IT.
SHKKT

Y'KNOW, YOU'RE GETTIN' TOO INTENSE FOR ME, JEAN PAUL, ACTIN' LIKE YOU DON'T EVEN NEED YOUR SPECS ANY--
CON-TACTS WORK BETTER. ALL RIGHT? LESS TO WORRY ABOUT.
YEAH, SURE, NO NEED TO GET SO--
JUST CUT THE HAIR, ROBIN, SO WE CAN GET ON WITH MY WORKOUT. Huh? AFTER WHAT KILLER CROC DID TO ME, IT'S TIME TO GET TOUGH.
YOU'RE CERTAIN THAT'S HIS CELL?
POSITIVE, BANE -- THIRD UNIT IN THE VIOLENT WARD...
GOT IT FROM THE SAME FORMER GUARD WE PAID OFF TO ACQUIRE THE BLUEPRINTS... AND EVEN IF THE SHOT'S NOT PERFECT, YOU'RE BOUND TO BREACH ONE OF THE VIOLENT CELLS.
I'LL MAKE IT PERFECT.
NITRO'S READY.
NOW, BANE.
KRAK

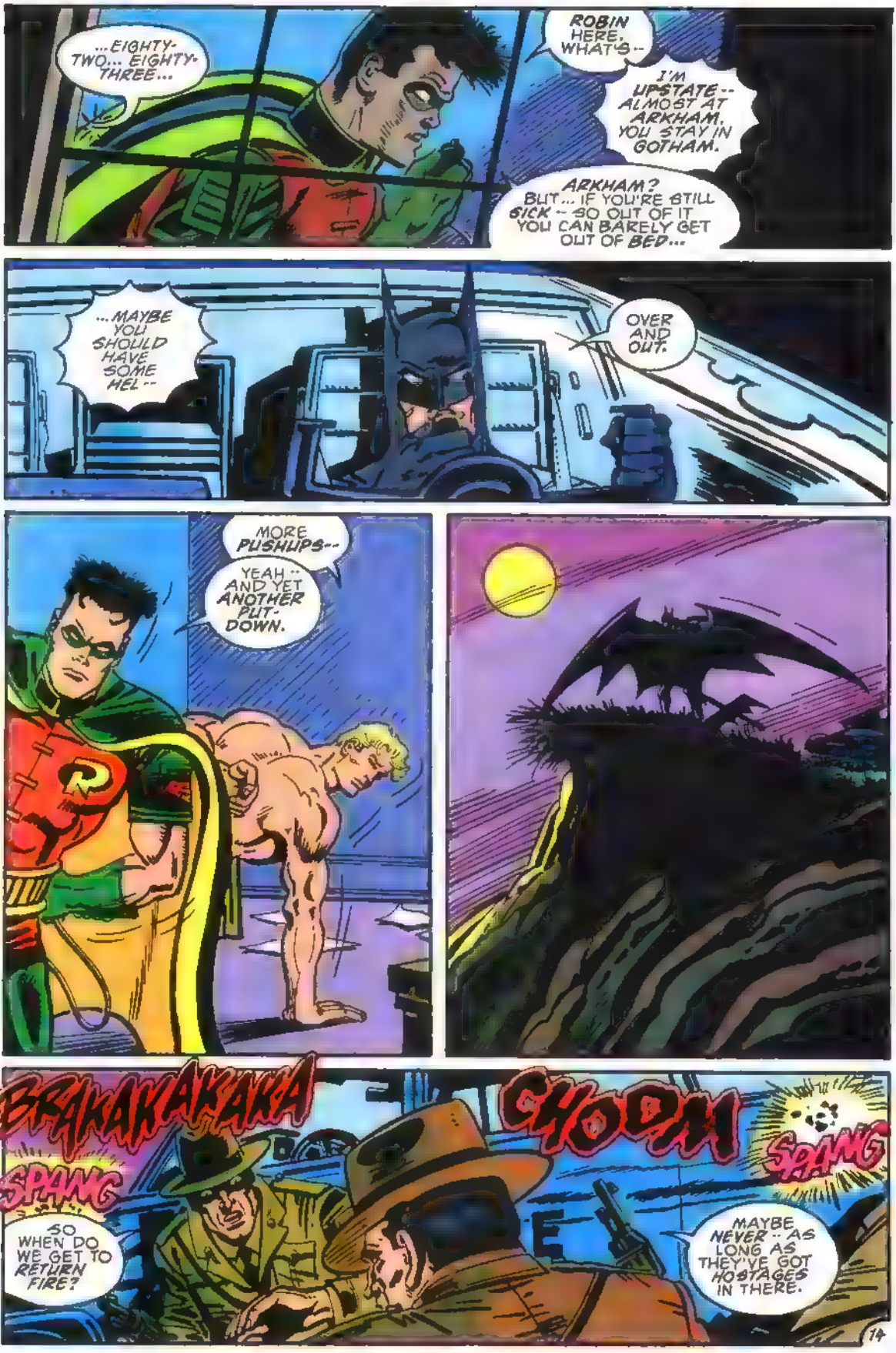
BAMM
BAOUMM
WHAT THE--?!
ORDERLIES!
THE SKY...
...IS... FALLING..?
YESSS...
YES!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HURRY!

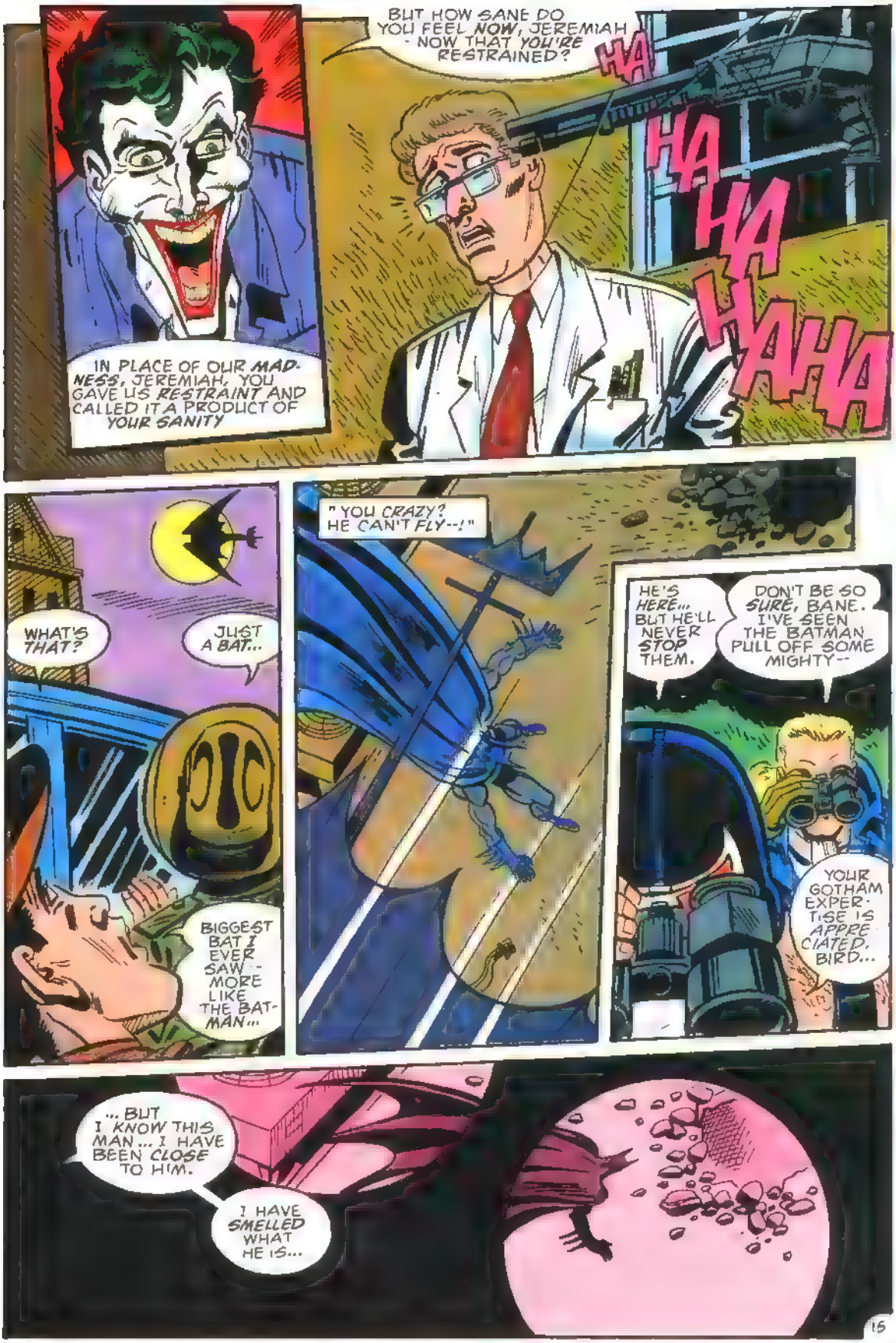
HELLO, GUARD...
CHOOM!
...GOODBYE, MEAT!
ZOOSH!
KROOM!
LAUNDRY
OPEN SEZ ME -- BECAUSE IT'S TIME FOR THE INMATES TO RUN THIS ASYLUM!
BESIDES, WE MAY NEED THE SPACE FOR A NEW PATIENT.
HAHAHAHAHA
OPEN
CLOSE
VMMM

FREE! YOU RE ALL FREE!
CHOOM
HAHAHA HA
OKAY, BANE -- ZOMBIE AND TROGG ARE LIFTING OFF IN THE CHOPPER.
WHP WHP WHP
ZOOSH
KAKROOM
GREETINGS, JEREMIAH ARKHAM -- AND WELCOME TO THE MAD-HOUSE!
YOUR CELL AWAITS!
HAHA HA HA HAHA


THEY'RE COMING OUT INTO THE YARD, TROGG...
DROP THE PRESENTS.
CRATES GOING OUT NOW.
SEPT
FWUFF
GUNNNNS!
KRATCH
ZOMBIE TO BANE: PRESENTS DELIVERED...
...BUT THE STATE POLICE HAVE ARRIVED - ENTERING THE GROUNDS NOW...
"STILL, IT SHOULD BE A FAIR FIGHT NOW."
STATE POLICE
IT'LL BE MORE THAN FAIR, ZOMBIE...
12

"... FAR MORE THAN FAIR."
MY GOD! WH-WHAT... WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE?
BRAM BRAM BRAM
BRAKAKAK
SOMEONE REGARDS YOUR NEW SECURITY WITH CONTEMPT, JEREMIAH ARKHAM: SOMEONE FINDS AMUSEMENT IN THE NOTION OF MADNESS BOILING AND SCAMPERING FROM THESE WALLS.
BUT NOW... SHALL WE TALK?
HA HA HA HA HA
HE AIN'T SHOWN YET, Huh, COMMISH?
NOT YET, BULLOCK -- BUT YOU SENT THE TACTICAL UNITS TO BACK UP THE STATE POLICE?
ON THEIR WAY...
AND OUR NEW MAYOR UNFORTUNATELY REQUESTS YOUR PLEASURE -- AT HIS MANSION -- NOW.
FIGURES -- PROBABLY ABOUT THE ARMORY THEFT... ALL THOSE WEAPONS IN THE HANDS OF LUNATICS.
IT SURE AIN'T ABOUT THE NEW COLOR SCHEME FOR HIS OFFICE!
ALL RIGHT... SHUT OFF THE SIGNAL, BULLOCK.
GIVIN' UP ON THE BATMAN, COMMISH?
WITH ANY LUCK, HE'S ALREADY HEARD ABOUT THE ARKHAM RIOT -- HALFWAY THERE BY NOW.
... SEVENTY-EIGHT... SEVENTY-NINE...
THE BATSIGNAL -- BUT IT JUST WENT OUT.
I WONDER WHAT--
DEET DEET DEET


...EIGHTY-TWO... EIGHTY-THREE...
ROBIN HERE. WHAT'S--
I'M UPSTATE -- ALMOST AT ARKHAM. YOU STAY IN GOTHAM.
ARKHAM? BUT... IF YOU'RE STILL SICK -- SO OUT OF IT YOU CAN BARELY GET OUT OF BED...
...MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE SOME HEL --
OVER AND OUT.
MORE PUSHUPS--
YEAH -- AND YET ANOTHER PUT-DOWN.
BKKAKAKAKA
CHOOM
SPANG
SPANG
SO WHEN DO WE GET TO RETURN FIRE?
MAYBE NEVER -- AS LONG AS THEY'VE GOT HOSTAGES IN THERE.


IN PLACE OF OUR MADNESS, JEREMIAH, YOU GAVE US RESTRAINT AND CALLED IT A PRODUCT OF YOUR SANITY
BUT HOW SANE DO YOU FEEL NOW, JEREMIAH - NOW THAT YOU'RE RESTRAINED?
HA HA HA HA HA
WHAT'S THAT?
JUST A BAT...
BIGGEST BAT I EVER SAW - MORE LIKE THE BAT-MAN...
"YOU CRAZY? HE CAN'T FLY--!"
HE'S HERE... BUT HE'LL NEVER STOP THEM.
DON'T BE SO SURE, BANE. I'VE SEEN THE BATMAN PULL OFF SOME MIGHTY--
YOUR GOTHAM EXPERTISE IS APPRECIATED, BIRD...
...BUT I KNOW THIS MAN... I HAVE BEEN CLOSE TO HIM.
I HAVE SMELLED WHAT HE IS...

"EVEN IF HE COULD STOP THEM, HE WON'T.
"HE WILL CHOOSE THE SAVING OF LIVES OVER THE APPREHENGION OF KILLERS...
DEAD.
"HE ALWAYS DOES.
"AND AS FOR THE POLICE... THEY NEVER HAD A CHANCE."
HEY- IT'S THE CAVALRY!
STATE POLICE
ABOUT TIME!
WHAT'S THE CURRENT HOSTAGE SITUATION?
MOST OF THE ORDERLIES HAVE MANAGED TO HOLE UP IN THE ROUNDHOUSE GARRISON -- BUT, BEFORE THE PHONE LINES WERE CUT, THEY REPORTED A NUMBER OF GUARDS DOWN...
... AND JEREMIAH ARKHAM TAKEN BY THE JOKER.
THE JOKER--?
"... THEN GOD HELP HIM."
ALL YOUR NEW SECURITY, JEREMIAH, BREACHED LIKE A WET PAPER BAG... ALL YOUR HARD WORK, UNDONE IN A TWINKLING OF FRENZY.
I LIKE THE WORD "TWINKLING," DON'T YOU? WERE YOU HARD TO POTTY TRAIN, JEREMIAH?
DOESN'T MATTER -- BECAUSE EVERYTHING YOU'VE TRAINED FOR, EVERYTHING YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED, IS SHATTERED...
... JUST LIKE YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW, JEREMIAH- SHATTERED.
HAHAHA

HOW'D THEY GET OUT INTO THE YARD? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WALL?
NEAR AS WE CAN FIGURE... SOME KIND OF SMART MISSILES.
MISSILES? BUT WHO THE--?
"WE DON'T KNOW... BUT OBVIOUSLY SOMEONE A LOT BETTER EQUIPPED THAN SADDAM HUSSEIN."
BRAKA
GHOOM
BLAM BLAM
-ALREADY DISPATCHED FIVE OF OUR TACTICAL UNITS, MR. MAYOR, TO ASSIST THE STATE POLICE ON THE SCENE...
... BUT WITH THE HOSTAGE SITUATION, I DON'T KNOW WHAT ANY COP COULD --
I CERTAINLY HOPE THEY'VE BEEN TOLD TO SHOOT TO KILL.
IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY MAYOR KROL. MY MEN DISCHARGE THEIR FIREARMS ONLY TO DEFEND THEMSELVES -- OR OTHERS.
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF DEAD MEN, GORDON -- SOMETHING I DO NOT WANT DURING MY ADMINISTRATION.
I RAN ON A LAW AND ORDER PLATFORM -- AND NOW THAT I'VE BEEN ELECTED, I'M NOT ABOUT TO ABANDON EVERYTHING I STAND FOR.
YOU RAN UNOPPOSED
EVEN MORE PROOF OF MY MANDATE!
PROOF OF YOUR MACHINE..
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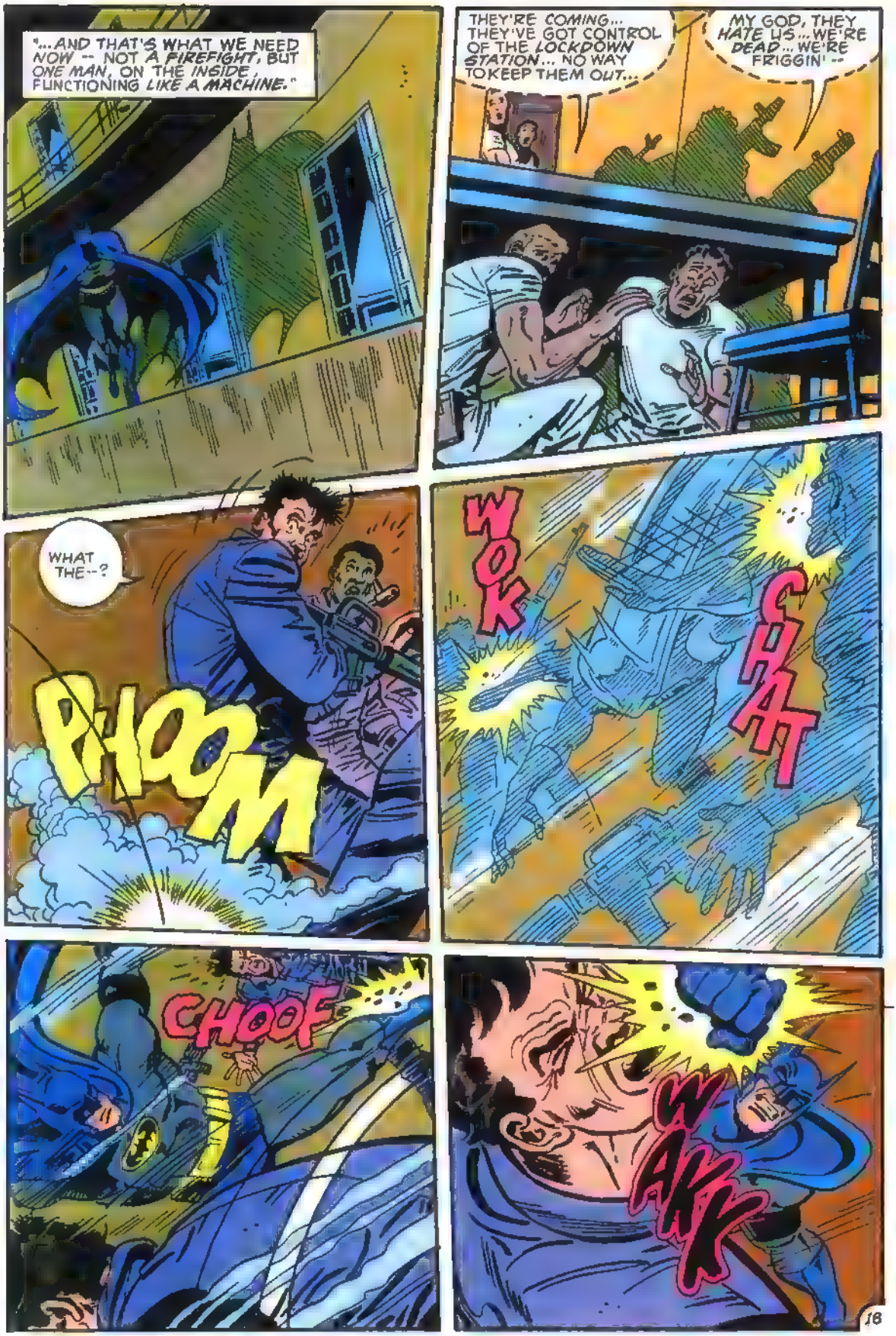
"...AND THAT'S WHAT WE NEED NOW -- NOT A FIREFIGHT, BUT ONE MAN, ON THE INSIDE, FUNCTIONING LIKE A MACHINE."
THEY'RE COMING... THEY'VE GOT CONTROL OF THE LOCKDOWN STATION... NO WAY TO KEEP THEM OUT...
MY GOD, THEY HATE US... WE'RE DEAD... WE'RE FRIGGIN' --
WHAT THE--?
PHOOM
WOK
CHAT
CHOOF
WARK

TAKE THE WEAPONS AND STAY HERE.
I'LL LOCK YOU IN.
YOU BEEFED UP SECURITY AND WHAT DID YOU GET, HAH? THE BEEFIEST BREAKOUT OF MADNESS IN ARKHAM'S HISTORY!
AND SOON YOUR OWN MADNESS WILL BREAK OUT, JEREMIAH, RIGHT OUT OF YOUR SHATTERED SKULL -- JUST AS SOON AS THOSE KNEES WEAKEN!
"BUT YOU'LL ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF MADNESS, JEREMIAH!"
TRUST ME! MADNESS IS THE ONLY FREEDOM -- AND ALL THE MADNESS ONCE RESTRAINED UNDER YOUR STRICT CONTROL WILL SOON BE FREE TO RUN WILLLD!
HA HA HA
CHAK
OPEN
CLOSE
YMMMM
TIME TO END IT -- GET THEM OUT OF HERE...
NOW!
ZOOSH
ZOOSH
ZOOSH

BUH BOOM
BAOUM
BOOM
GOTHAM TACTICAL
FREEEEEE!!
BRAKAKAKA KAKAK
BTAM
CHOOM
THE JOKER-?!
G-GONE... C-CRAZY... Huh- HELP ME... CAN'T STAND ANY MORE!
ONE CHANCE -- AND THE THROW MUST BE PERFECT...
..WHILE THE JOKER RUNS FREE!
HAHA
HAHA

CHOOM
SPAP
FREE...
HEEYAHAHAHAHA
AIEEEE
ARAWOOOOO
YAAHAHA
...THEY'RE FREE...
...ALL OF THEM...
...EXCEPT ONE...
FREE...I'M F-FREEEE...heh... ha...ha..ha... heh.
THEIR KEEPER.
IT WAS SAFER ON THE INSIDE, COMMISH ... ALL HOSTAGES SAVED BUT SEVENTEEN MEN DOWN ON THE OUTSIDE ... SIX OF 'EM OURS... NONE OF 'EM INMATES.
THEY'RE ALL LOOSE... RUNNIN' WILD LIKE A PACK O' MAD DOGS.

THEN GOD HELP US, BUT MAYBE...
...KROL WAS RIGHT...
"...AND NOW WE HAVE TO FIND...
WHP WHP WHP WHP WHP
WHP WHP
"...WHO DID IT."
IF I DIDN'T WANT HIS BLOOD SO BADLY...
...I WOULD ALMOST PITY HIM.
NYAAAGH AGH GR RRR RRR

NEXT: KNIGHTFALL PART 1

S·C·A·R·E·C·R·O·W

BAT-SIGNALS

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Big Announcement/Tease

What a time to come on board the best line of comics in the world! Over the past couple months, while settling into my new assistant editor position, Denny, Scott—who is now a full Editor—and I have been working like ducks (uh, that's "dogs," Buford) on a major surprise. Several, really.

First, three facts: 1) The Batman titles arguably claim the best writers and artists working in the comics business today; 2) These creators are working on the all-time greatest characters in the comics biz; and 3) the big five-oh-oh of this title is fast approaching. Put the facts together and what do you get?

We put the challenge to our creators: build a storyline worthy of your immense collective genius, one that will irrevocably shake up the status quo, something so big that it will encompass most of our existing Bat-books—or more (hint hint)—to tell it.

Their reaction? Try to hold us back!

Thus begins "Knightfall." This epic will not be told in a graphic novel. It will not be found in a miniseries. No, the action will be right here, every month in BATMAN, in DETECTIVE and—very soon—in, shall we say, "other" monthly books.

*Batman is going where he has never been before...**be prepared.***

Dear Bat-Signals,

A lot of people have been writing to you lately to comment on how good the covers of BATMAN have been. Every Batman cover I've seen has indeed been excellent. For instance, the cover of BATMAN #486 was superb. The way Batman was gliding over Black Mask made a terrific effect. Also, the buildings were drawn with such detail that you wouldn't think anyone would put so much effort into one cover.

You should make a comics series with just Robin in it.

Matthew Minehan
Padstow Heights, N.S.W.
Australia

It is never too late to thank Michael Golden for not only rendering many of the past year's too-outstanding-to-believe covers but for also coloring them in his inimitable and unparalleled style. Michael is taking a break from doing our covers for a while (translation: write in and demand his return), but we think we found a couple of guys to fill the void he has left. The first was newcomer Travis Charest whose work graced the cover of this issue and graces the interior of THE DARKSTARS each and every month. Let me know if you want to see more of him around these parts. As you probably already realized, next up on cover duty is Kelley Jones. (Did I say—write, type—Kelley Jones? Yow!)

Dear Scott,

There is no doubt in my mind: that old Moench charm is coming back. BATMAN #486 was an excellent issue. I'm now certain that only good things will be coming to this title.

Doug wrote an interesting story, equal to the great stories he wrote some years back in BATMAN. While Metalhead isn't exactly, uh, top villain material, he presented yet another new challenge for the Batman to oppose. The continuing story with Black Mask also looks to be great. I like the way that this comic is developing one big story arc through each issue's self-contained stories.

Doug's interpretation of the Batman in this issue was quite well done. This Batman reminds me of the one from Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's "A Lonely Place of Dying." This is a Batman who is determined to stop crime at all costs, a Batman who is willing to inflict upon himself all sorts of torture.

Alfred's talk with Tim Drake was also brilliant on Doug's part. While Doug doesn't employ Tim Drake as actively as Chuck Dixon does, he does tell us about Tim's relationship with his dad while also giving us some compelling scenes of him in the Batcave.

I really hope that this keeps up, because BATMAN is returning to greatness. It will be good to see how Batman recuperates from his battle with Metalhead next issue.

The look of Jim Aparo's art/lettering combination also brought this comic back to a golden (or silver) age. This comic may not look as modern as SHADOW OF THE BAT, but I think that the classic look works. In fact, it works incredibly. Jim will always be *the* Batman artist to beat. While I greatly enjoy Norm Breyfogle's work—he's about tied with Jim—Jim's look defined Batman in the first place, and always will. The rendition of Robin is the only thing I have a slight problem with. Jim is perfectly able to draw Grayson or Todd, but his Drake doesn't look as good as, say, Tom Lyle's or Norm's does. Aside from that, the art was perfect. Jim draws the definitive Alfred.

The covers of late have been excellent. The only improvement would be a new logo.

Joey Marchese
Union, NJ

Yeah, Jim does draw the definitive Alfred, doesn't he? I also think he draws a one-of-a-kind, hilarious Sergeant Bullock.

The only problem with the logo I can possibly come up with is that it (unavoidably) masks part of our gorgeous covers. But that, as they say, is comicsbiz. People have to know what they are buying.

Dear Batman and Robin,

I really liked issue #486. Batman, why don't you use Robin more often to help fight? I, myself, like Batman, but my little brother really likes Robin. I watch *Batman: The Animated Series* every day. I've not missed one episode except one. I hope you find Black Mask. Me and my friend talk about you all the time. His name is Jeff.

Steve Erriman
Smithville, TN

Denny and Scott,

BATMAN #486 was terrifying.

I've never seen Batman so obsessed, so intense, not even in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. This issue was another chapter in the continuing Black Mask storyline, and I thank Doug Moench for giving this title what it needed—a real story of more than two parts.

As I said before, Batman was actually scary in this issue, more of an inhuman machine serving justice than the intelligent crime-fighter he normally is. Everyone goes off the deep end once in a while, but when someone as stoic and unemotional as the Batman takes that leap...

I've really been enjoying Jim Aparo's work since he started inking it himself. I don't like to shoot off my big mouth, because I can't ink worth a darn, but I disliked Mike DeCarlo's work on this title. He made Jim's figures stiff, his backgrounds stale.

Before I go, I heartily agree with Justin Weddle in the lettercol—let's see an entire issue photographed by Tom Taggart. Also, let's see GOTHAM NIGHTS II.

Mike Leonard
Cherry Tree, PA

John Ostrander and Mary Mitchell are hard at work creating GOTHAM NIGHTS II. Believe you me, it is worth the wait!

Your comments about Jim's art raise an interesting subject. In Jim's long and illustrious illustrating career, his pencils have, to my knowledge, been inkea by only two people other than himself—Frank Giacoia and Mike DeCarlo. I know for a fact that some of the best inkers in the business have long yearned for a crack at inking an issue of Jim Aparo. I put it to you readers—should Denny and I invite some of them to finally do so?

Dear Bat-Signals,

I have just recently started reading your comics and I must say that out of the few I have read, BATMAN #486, "Metalhead," was a definite number one! We finally get to see Batman when he is not the absolutely perfect person. We also get to see a growing friendship between Alfred and Robin.

Now for some questions. Why did the first Robin (Dick Grayson) become Nightwing? How did the second Robin (Jason Todd) get killed by the Joker? Finally, how did Batman find the third Robin (Tim Drake)?

Thanks very much for providing me with great comics every two weeks. Keep 'em coming.

Heather Derflinger
Linthicum, MD

Heather is one of only two females to write us this month. While she is certainly a terrific representative of female Bat-fans everywhere, I would like to hear from some others, too! Whaddya say?

To answer your questions in order, Heather:

1. Dick Grayson struck out on his own after Batman, citing the inherent dangers involved for someone so young to be fighting crime, forbade him to continue being Robin. Dick left him and co-founded the New Titans. Eventually he created his Nightwing identity to further separate himself from his former mentor.

2. Jason Todd died trying to save his mother from the Joker's bomb.

3. Batman did not find Tim Drake, Tim Drake found Batman, by way of Dick Grayson.

To learn more, check out the trade paperbacks A DEATH IN THE FAMILY and A LONELY PLACE OF DYING, which collect the full stories chronicling Jason's untimely death and Tim's rise to Robinhood.

Dear Editor,

The only thing I disliked about BATMAN #486 was the cover. It must have been the result of poor planning. When Batman is in a swell fight scene, you should not show him with his back to the "camera." Takes all the impact out of the scene.

The issue should once again quiet those who say that Doug Moench writes a "wimpy" Batman. The version we see here is intense to the point where we can see the tongues of flame coming out of his ears and mouth.

Allow me to add something to Alfred's armchair psychology. If Batman's reason for establishing his career was to avenge the death of his parents, then he should have been able to find some measure of peace after Joe Chill was caught and punished for his crimes. But he didn't. I reason that this is because he feels he *failed to protect* his parents when he was a child—hence, his obsession in this issue and others with "failure" (or presumed failure). So, he goes out every night, the same scene replaying over and over in his mind, determined that this time he'll "succeed."

When I first saw Metalhead, I thought, "Moench and Aparo have been seeing too many Clive Barker movies. I'll bet his *real* first name is Spike." But I would like to see him again. That suit of his, despite Batman's victory, turned out to be a near-perfect anti-Batman weapon. Rule Number One is not to let Batman get in close quarters with you.

Also, this guy's got excellent long-distance weaponry and a *very* nasty attitude. And when you get right down to it, Metalhead was the smart one to go home and get some sleep.

Now, a suggestion. The Superman titles are doing great business with the "Baldy Awards." So, may I suggest a similar award for Batman lettercols—the Harvey Award. If you like the letter, you send half the award. And if you like another letter written by the same person, you send them the other half of the award.

Charles D. Brown
Brentwood, NY

Don't push your luck, Chuck.

Dear Denny and Scott,

I just read "Metalhead" for the third time. I felt that there was something special about this issue, that it was one of those rare, more-than-excellent comics.

The cover, for starters, is a corker, the action taking place in an eerie nighttime graveyard, drawn as only Jim Aparo can draw graveyards. Doug Moench and Jim truly excelled on this one—what a writer/artist team! The large upper panel on page three, showing Metalhead's dramatic first appearance in the dingy, sleazy, smoke-filled underworld haunt, is absolutely stupendous and has maximum dramatic effect. This is what all Batman comics should be like.

Metalhead is quite an original villain, with his black figure, spiky head and barbed lash fixed to the top of his head. He has a striking appearance. Jim Aparo draws a sharp, tough and dynamic Batman. He's recognized as one of the best professional comics artists for good reason. Doug Moench writes a stressed-out, realistic Batman who bleeds and feels pain. One moment he's exhausted, then suddenly he doesn't feel tired anymore. Great stuff. Keep it coming.

John Miller
Edinburgh, Scotland

"Striking appearance"—ha ha ha! I get it! And you thought Jim Aparo draws a "sharp" Batman! Hee hee hee!

Dear Bat-Signals,

Metalhead is a very cool character for Batman to beat up on.

I want to know why he hates comedians.

Batman is one of my favorite superheroes and always has been.

I have one complaint—Tim Drake a.k.a. Robin. Get rid of him some way. Kill him, make him move to another country, do something!

Long live Batman!

Leonora Vuser-Schutz
New York, NY

P.S. More Catwoman, please!

I hope I never get on Leonora's bad side!

Dear Bat Mail,

I'm a first-time writer. I never wrote before because I thought the odds against me were too great. I hope I can make it into the comics. I thought BATMAN #486, "Metalhead," was terrific. I enjoyed seeing the true obsessive nature of the Batman in this issue. When will Clayface and Riddler appear in the series?

Stephen Smith
Cincinnati, OH

Hope you enjoyed seeing a completely different Riddler than we have ever seen before in our last issue, Stephen. Clayface? Ah yes, Clayface, heh heh heh...

The odds of getting printed are "great," though not "against" you, Stephen. Nevertheless, you should not be deceived by how "easily" you got into this lettercol. I'm being a big softy this issue, this being my first time at Bat (Signals). Next issue I am going to get a lot tougher. Yeah!

Right now, though, I am going to have my dinner, some of Charles D. Brown's aforementioned "tongues of flame"—in a lovely tomato sauce, just like my Nana used to make. Yum!

MTGGLF,
Jordan B. Gorfinkel
—It was just a scratch!

Say, did I happen to mention that we have big plans for Batman this year? BIG plans!

SPECIAL PLUG: If you have not yet picked up BATMAN: SEDUCTION OF THE GUN, please do so. This one-shot special (no pun intended) has garnered a lot of unexpected but well-deserved media attention because of its timely, frank treatment of a very serious and sensitive subject, teenage gun abuse. It is written by John Ostrander of GOTHAM NIGHTS fame and drawn by Vince Giarrano, artist of the latest story arc in SHADOW OF THE BAT. It is undoubtedly the most powerful storytelling of the year. (A special letters section responding to SEDUCTION will appear soon in Bat-Signals.)

IN DETECTIVE "Prelude to Knightfall," begun here in BATMAN, continues. Two of Gotham's wealthiest businessmen are dead and Lucius Fox will follow unless Batman, Robin and Azrael can intervene in time! It's a race against the clock in DETECTIVE COMICS #658 by Chuck "Buzz" Dixon, Michael Netzer and Scott Hanna.

IN THE SHADOW looms the psychopath Kadaver. He is dying and plans to take Gotham with him! And just *what* is the Human Flea? Alan Grant, Vince Giarrano and Tiger the Dog's flea powder tell all in SHADOW OF THE BAT #11.

IN ADVENTURES, Killer Croc takes on the only man ever to beat him—the hired muscle of the gangster Batman wants to take down! THE BATMAN ADVENTURES #7 is brought to you by Kelley Puckett, Mike Parobeck and Rick Burchett and is not to be missed. (For those of you living in the Sahara for the past six months, THE BATMAN ADVENTURES is a series based on the hit Fox-TV series and is the funkiest title on the comics rack. Get with the program and buy this comic!)

IN THIRTY DAYS: "Knightfall," Part One. Mad Hatter is the first of the Arkham Asylum escapees to strike...by throwing a tea party for Batman?! Plus, Bane supplies all the lumps—to Film Freak's face. The gruesome turnout is in BATMAN #492 by Doug Moench and features a special return engagement of Norm Breyfogle!

This issue's cover was beautifully rendered by Kelley Jones and colored by Bob Le Rose. Special thanks to Ann Diament for her help with sorting this issue's mail.

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GCPD Guy

Driven mad by the light of the scanner, these men have been committed - to excellence

JANUSREDWAY **GCPD-Guy**

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THE INSOMNIACS